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Reeducation in Vietnam

Hanoi Still Holds Thousands From South

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HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam—
Ten years ago, Nguyen, a young South Vietnamese military intelligence officer, was torn between despair and hope. On the one hand, he feared a "coming bloodbath" as the North Vietnamese Army closed around Saigon and the former South Vietnamese government crumbled. On the other hand, he recalled, as an officer whose bureau had worked closely with U.S. intelligence, "I was assured of an imminent evacuation."

But, like thousands of others, Nguyen was left behind when the last Americans departed only hours before the fall of Saigon to communist forces on April 30, 1975. Arrested soon afterward, he spent the

next eight years in reeducation camps.

Today, Nguyen, who only recently managed to find a menial job, is a bitter man. Like countless other Vietnamese, he desperately wants to leave the country. Yet, as he explained in a letter passed to a correspondent here, it is with mixed feelings that he yearns to go to the United States.

"Time doesn't heal everything, most of all hard feelings," he wrote, "and for me, asking to go to the States to start my life anew is something like turning to a friend who has deserted you in hours of despair and misery. But 10 years is more than a 'decent interval,' and I'm as ever a dreamer dreaming of a white Christmas." The references were to the title of a book by for-

mer CIA agent Frank Snepp and the Bing Crosby song that signaled the final U.S. evacuation from Saigon.

He ended his letter, "Hello to the free world."

Enclosed with the letter was what U.S. refugee officials in Bangkok call a "charm school diploma," a certificate of release from communist reeducation.

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